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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fourteen members of the Human Rights Council

Letter dated 17 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to inform you that the State of Qatar has decided to present its candidacy for election to the Human Rights Council for the membership period 2007-2010 in the elections to take place during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly in May 2007.

In that regard, I have the honour to forward to you herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments of the State of Qatar at the national and international levels, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 (see annex).

I would appreciate it if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 17 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

[Original: Arabic]

The State of Qatar pays great and increasing attention to the goal of promoting and protecting human rights, considering that effort the cornerstone of the policy of constitutionally, politically, economically, socially and culturally comprehensive reform followed by Qatar. Owing to this deep-rooted belief in the importance of the promotion and protection of human rights, the State of Qatar has decided to present its candidacy for membership on the Human Rights Council, in whose establishment the State of Qatar participated from the outset in order for it to replace the Commission on Human Rights and correct all the drawbacks inherent in the work of the Commission, of which Qatar had been a member.

In this connection it should be mentioned that developments in the field of human rights in Qatar have taken place at every level and can be summarized under the following main headings:

- Legislation;
- Institutions;
- Interaction with the international system for the protection and promotion of human rights;
- Hosting of conferences.

I. Legislation

The question of human rights has played a major role in comprehensive reform policy, thanks to the new Constitution, which was adopted by means of a popular referendum held in 2003, was ratified by His Highness the beloved Emir of Qatar in 2004 and entered into force in June 2005.

Chapter III of the Constitution is devoted to rights freedoms, which are covered by Articles 34 to 58.

The new Constitution adopted the principle of the interdependence, interrelatedness and indivisibility of human rights and provides guarantees of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights.

Among the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, we might mention, among others, equality before the law, the prohibition against discrimination, personal freedom, the criminalization of torture, freedom of the press and expression, the establishment of associations, freedom of worship, the right to work, the right to education and the right of assembly.

The fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution have been strengthened and promoted through the passage of other legislation, of which we may mention some examples: the Penal Code, the Labour Code, the Private Institutions and Associations Act, the Public Prosecution Act, the Judicial Authority Act, the Settlement of Constitutional Disputes Act, the Settlement of Administrative Disputes Act and Royal Decree No. 14 of 2007 ratifying International Labour Organization Convention No. 105 (of 1957) concerning the Abolition of Forced

Labour, which acquired force of law pursuant to article 68 of the country's permanent Constitution.

II. Institutions

The State's concern with human rights has expressed itself in the establishment of numerous institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights with all their interdependence, interrelatedness and indivisibility, at both the governmental and non-governmental levels. At the governmental level, numerous departments concerned with human rights have been set up within ministries, such as the Office of Human Rights in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Human Rights in the Ministry of the Interior, the Supreme Council of Family Affairs and the Office of the National Coordinator on Human Trafficking. At the non-governmental level, Qatar has seen the establishment of the National Human Rights Committee, which pursuant to Royal Decree No. 25 of 2006 was brought into line with the Paris Principles, and the founding of a number of civil-society organizations concerned with human rights and development.

In addition, the role of the Department of Labour in the Ministry of Civil Service and Housing Affairs has been activated with a view to providing the necessary protection for workers coming to the country as a result of the economic and development boom the State of Qatar is experiencing.

III. Interaction with the international system for the protection and promotion of human rights

Within the framework of its observance of international human rights law, the State has ratified a number of human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two related Protocols, the Convention against Torture and the Convention on Racial Discrimination, and has submitted initial and periodic reports to the committees on those conventions. It is assiduous in implementing the recommendations of contractual mechanisms and in providing a suitable climate for the implementation of the provisions of the said conventions.

The State is currently carrying out the final formalities for accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In the interest of Qatar's compliance with the special mechanisms, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Ms. Sigma Huda, visited the country within the framework of her mandate relating to trafficking in persons, especially women and children, from 8 to 12 November 2006, upon a request by her to which the State of Qatar acquiesced. The Special Rapporteur valued the considerable action undertaken by Qatar at the legislative, institutional and procedural levels towards combating the phenomenon of trafficking in persons and reported that the visit was a positive prelude to constructive dialogue with the Government aimed at helping to promote measures at the international level to eliminate the phenomenon of human trafficking.

Qatar has also acceded to a request by the Special Rapporteur on migrants to visit the country during the current year.

It should also be mentioned that Qatar is to host the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region, established by General Assembly resolution 60/153. The centre aims, by

means of training, information, documentation, studies and the exchange of experience, to promote and strengthen human rights through cooperation with Governments in the development of human rights policies and the promotion of human rights principles.

IV. Hosting of conferences

Qatar has continued its policy of openness towards the hosting of international conferences dealing with questions of development, democracy and human rights. In this regard, mention may be made of numerous world conferences that have been hosted by Qatar, such as the sixth International Conference on New or Restored Democracies and the U.S.-Islamic World Forum, among others. In addition, Doha is to host, during the current year, the Doha Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade and the Doha Inter-faith Forum.